



# FASHION INTERNATIONAL

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## SWIM SCENE

### 2002

Keywords for spring 2002  
*"versatile" and  
"multifunctional"*

"Since the tragic events of September 11, we've experienced a shifting economy in which retailing is challenged", says Tom Julian, a leading trend analyst from Fallon World Wide Advertising Agency. He predicts that retailers will respond with a streamlined approach, rather than with the overabundance of themes typical of the past few years. Luxury retailer, Neiman Marcus, has already taken a streamlined approach for their Swim 2002 buy. Their Senior Vice President and Fashion Director, Joan Kaner,

## EUROPA, EUROPA

### SPRING 2002 RTW

The European designers are again referencing the past, with several decades and influences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century well represented: the fragile chemises of the '20s, the ladylike structured outfits that Jackie Kennedy wore in the '60s, and the sensuous bias cuts

and slinky jerseys of the '70s disco era. Where they do move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is in the use of modern fabrics and construction elements. The color palette too runs the gamut. Winter's neutral colors have given way to sunny hot pinks and corals,

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FREE BY GOTTEX

outlines the three leading swim stories: Deauville/Nautical, à la Bond Girl Glamour, and Remember When/Nostalgia. Deauville is the return to that traditional stand-by, the nautical theme, and the epitome of what is classical and traditional. "Deauville," says Ms. Kaner, "includes any mix of white with navy and/or red,

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and stripes, especially those that are mitered or engineered. Design includes mixing a solid and a pattern within the same suit. Distinctive accents are gros-grain belts and trim." We saw several different interpretations of nautical in the showrooms that include Deauville, patriotic red/white/blue themes, plaids and Americana country club. In this category, standouts for FI include the "Knot Exactly" grouping at Anne Cole Collection, in navy tricot, and the "American Dream" grouping at XOXO Swim by Gottex, a denim look with an American flag print.

Bond Girl a.k.a. the "sexy and obvious" look, another leading theme, means open season on cutouts, from handkerchief-hemmed tankinis to the very provocative. Identifying details are low riding hipsters, lacing, gold and silver stitching and hardware. Our standouts in this category include the new trikini by Joyce Azria for BCBG that becomes a halter bikini when you release the bottom from the metal loop holding it together. This '70s glam suit is a knockout in a sparkly "golden sands" crochet knit/ Lurex as well as a popping fuchsia or "fraise". These convertible one-pieces offer full coverage on the bottom but a high leg for some sex ap-



BCBG

peal. Gottex also weighs in with plunge maillots and halter cutout suits; some ornamented with gold and crystal hardware. While undoubtedly glamorous, cutout suits are more figure challenging than the tiny string bikinis pervasive last year. Anne Cole has had great success with their plunging V "scandal suit". They have kept it on the line since introducing it in the '60s, making minor modifications over the years. Its deep frontal V is filled in with mesh. For another approach, add faux suede to the V-plunge and cutout silhouettes, then mix with some strategically placed Swarovski crystal buckles, and you have a preview of Jennifer Lopez' new diva-worthy J.Lo/Backflips line.

Think back to the bathing beauties of the '40s and '50s for Remember When/Nostalgia. Important elements are the swim dress, retro lower leg opening, ruching, halters and side boning. Nancy Long, Fashion Editor for the TOBE Report notes "an abundance of suits with smaller, modified ruffles across the bodice that mimic the craze for ruffles on the RTW runways". Large graphics like big florals, particularly in black and white, and big tropical flowers, especially Hibiscus and bougainvillea prints, in coral, turquoise and white, are found throughout the market, from the junior lines like Hot Coles to Ralph Lauren's new plus size line,



sharp black and white, turquoise, soft greens and yellow. Gray remains in the picture, as do the ubiquitous camouflage colors of last season.

**BLUMARINE** is strong on color, especially corals, reds, and even rich browns. Vivid floral and re-colored leopard prints, in brown on coral ground, are especially cheery when translated into a range of denim separates like the jean jacket and flared pants with embroidered flowers and laser cut-outs. There are also some chic stretchy knit pieces in a brown/coral tropical flower print. The one-shoulder bias cut dress with front and back slits and sprinkled sequin flowers works nicely from day-to-dinner, as does the side-zip split skirt and sparkly rayon/spandex long sleeve little tee, and a sexy nylon/spandex knit dance dress in brown. The coral beaded starfish and scattered branch coral accents provide the perfect spark of color. More girly are the red/pink/gray floral chiffon separates and the lacey ruffled little knit tops, as well as the pointelle sweaters that work back with bias chiffon dresses and frilly skirts in pale pink and light blue.

**ANNA MOLINARI** likes ladylike dressing. Her soft pink damask coat and dress ensemble with self-bow and belt are pure Jackie Kennedy



in mood and structure. Also in this vein and decade is a terrific A-line dress in bright coral stretch, complete with welt seaming. The wide black shoulder straps and piping at the neckline offers sharp contrast and punch. Molinari shows some interesting prints for spring, especially the lace pattern in black on coral or brown on ivory. These are utilized in a pretty range of day-to-evening separates. Also charming are the ethereal '20s chemise dance dresses in black silk and lace with pale flower trims, and a simply lovely crepe slip dress in black with ivory/black lace panels that follow the bias curve of the garment.

At **CERRUTI 1881**, the emphasis is on unexpected fabrications and subtle details played against a muted palette. Soft leather and suede, crisp white cotton, palm leaf prints, taupe and khaki tones, topstitch and pick stitch details, pale beading, and subtle Lurex touches set this collection apart for its quiet refinement. Standouts include a fabulous pea jacket in buttery bone suede, the creamy ivory "seashell" beaded slim skirt and shell, and the louver pleating on ice, lemon, and ivory silk organza dresses. In addition, the pale glazed cotton group with welting details and the silk denims that mix and match with Lurex touched knit pieces are exceptional.

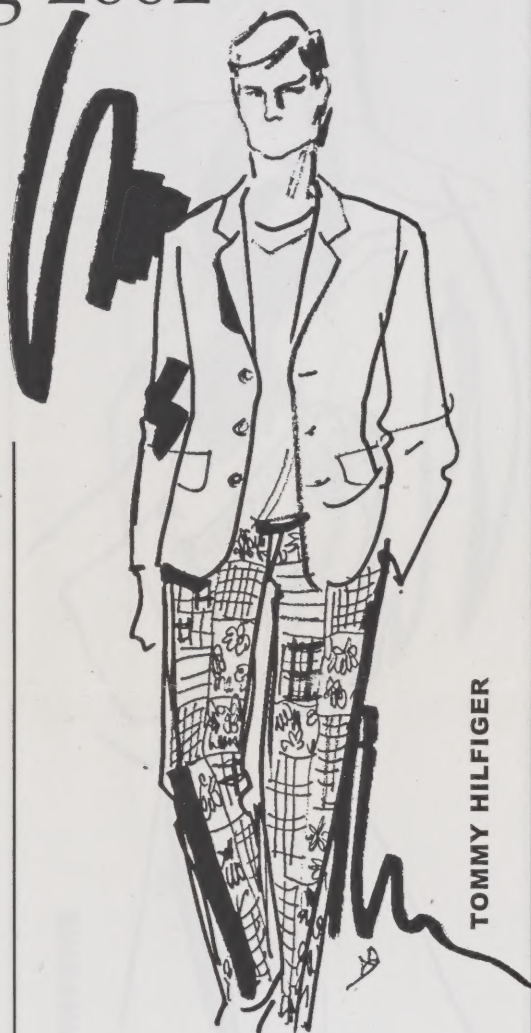


# DIVERSE DIRECTIONS

## Men's Spring 2002

For spring, men's wear designers continue to stick to their respective points of view. The result is a handful of fractured presentations devoid of a central theme. However, this is not to say that there are not some great clothes out there to wear come spring. *FI* spoke with two very respected industry analysts, David Wolfe of the Doneger Group and Roseanne Morrison of the Tobe Report, to get their take on the shows.

Mr. Wolfe had strong reactions to the shows remarking that "what was wrong was very wrong. It's okay to have a subversive fantasy when you're living in good times, but not now — especially in terms of what happened on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Down and out images that are in the gutter, like trailer trash kind of people, are no longer avant-garde and edgy." In his view, designer menswear has evolved into a sea of sameness on the selling floor, with many designers falling into the pitfall of creating clothes for "a mythical 22 year old who looks like Brad Pitt". The idea of dressing down is past its prime. The actual consumer is interested in



wearing suits again. "The idea of a suit look is where we're at," continues Mr. Wolfe, "as men are going to be taking their employment more seriously." Confirmation is in the numbers, with Saks Fifth Avenue seeing double-digit growth in their suit business since April of this year.

This development spells good news for designers such as John Varvatos. Both Mr. Wolfe and Ms. Morrison

praise Mr. Varvatos for delivering clothes that are based on tradition, elegant with just enough of a twist to keep customers interested. At the other end of the spectrum is designer Everett Hall who specializes in colorful suits that are generously cut — a plus for the man who wants to hide a multitude of sins, but not for guy who weighs 125 pounds.

For non-office dressing, both Mr. Wolfe and Ms. Morrison applaud Tommy Hilfiger's latest effort. Mr. Wolfe enthused, "Tommy had enough of a spin that it was exciting". Ms. Morrison finds Hilfiger to be "right on trend" with a fun collection loaded with color and some great vintage-inspired tennis whites.

### *Men's Spring Collections — Runway Recap*

#### **Everett Hall**

"My collection is dedicated to clothes horses. The clothes are for guys who are CEO's or who aspire to be. It's about how they want to look ... in every situation; at work or while on vacation."

Hall used linen, but there was nothing rumpled looking about it. Soft pastels (soft yellows in particular) looked fresh and sophisti-



Lauren Woman. Other great looks include XOXO Swim's screen/print of a movie starlet in either light pink or light turquoise; and Gottex' romantic approach with Degas ballerina and Monet water lily prints in refreshing grass green and aqua.

Fabric innovations have been news for the last decade, and manufacturers continue to work with a variety of hybrid fabrics that allow them greater versatility as they design their collections. Combinations of faux leather trim, lace and cotton with performance wear Lycra, nylon, and Tactel make for more visually interesting suits. A strong emergence of fabric innovations has occurred in the plus size niche. Iris Le Braun of DuPont remarks that the fabrics in plus size have more "gutsyness" to them, i.e. they don't give as much. A key player in size 14+ is Powernet, a mix of Lycra soft (a new yarn, whose focus is a shaping function) and Tactel. Powernet is used for tummy control. The construction of a plus suit is particularly important as it ties into the key issue of support. Soft molded cups or underwire are used in bras to give figure definition. In the plus market, other figure flattering techniques include the use of ombre fabrics that help give the illusion of a V-shaped torso. Additionally, lace fronts, high neck styles, empire waists, and

stripes that direct the eye upwards are all figure flatterers as is that old stand-by of using darker fabric below the waistline.

Fabric innovation is not the only area where the plus market excels. In this particular segment of the swim market the financial outlook is good. Although still a niche market, it continues to perform well, helped by the fact that the average woman in the U.S.A. is a size 12 or 14. The challenge, according to Tom Julian, is for manufacturers to get increased floor space in the higher end retail establishments. "So far," Fallon observes, "they have created strong departments in fashion conscious discount retailers like K-Mart and Target." Iris LeBraun echoes these thoughts:

"The large size market has not been paid too much attention. The demand in this sector is increasing. We have young teenagers who want forward hip and trendy things that are functional and suitable. Manufacturers are beginning to take notice and are starting to put their energies in this growing sector."

Ms. LeBraun spotted some very sharp black and white graphic suits, and noteworthy metallic silver and gold suits in the plus market. "The tankini," she continues, "has been a great solution to the option between bikini and one-piece." Delta Burke, TV star turned fash-

ion and swim designer, and Ralph Lauren both offer attractive options for plus sizes. Mr. Lauren's large black and white flower print in his Lauren Woman line is the same one he used for his standard size Lauren Swim line. Bright colors are signature to the Delta Burke Swim plus size only line, which is currently in its seventh season. The line's best seller is the high neck one-piece and the full coverage tankini (no exposed midriff). Sizes at Delta Burke Swim start at 16W and go to 24W. Their fit model is an 18W. Best-selling sizes are 16, 18 and 20. "Most importantly," says Anne Sheehy, Vice-President and General Manager of Delta Burke Design, "the suit has to be visually flattering." The plus size client, according to Ms. Sheehy, has an interest in print, color and pattern. At Delta Burke Swim, graphic black and white suits in "Duco Print", a process that simulates beading yet is totally flat, are very successful, and bright colors continue to be successful season after season. For the customer who fancies some glitz, there are enhancing details such as "S" gold hardware, and rhinestuds and rhinestones used as "belts" on one-piece suits offer a waist slimming effect as an added bonus.

Overall, with an increasingly financially conservative consumer, the issue of versatility plays an impor-



cated. Trouser legs were loose and relaxed, yet never sloppy. He made use of iridescent "Super 120 wool" for high neck three-button suits coordinated with crisp point collar dress shirts and shimmering solid ties that matched the pastel suits. For CEO's and aspiring CEO's on vacation, there are semi-sheer Chairman Mao shirts and pants in black, white or creme.

**Gene Meyer's** show was an ode to fond memories including "jocks, nerds, stripes, and chocolate brown walls with orange trim". The gang of good looking tan models walked barefoot on a runway covered in a fuchsia, red and cream geometric patterned rug from Meyer's new collection of rugs for **M&M Design International**. The rug served as the perfect backdrop for the explosively colorful clothing. Meyer brought the geometric theme into clothing as well, with chevron striped leather jackets and multicolored cotton jersey jockey sleeved T-shirts. He treated the audience to whimsical hot pink, cotton suspender, striped sleeveless shirts to tiny lime microfiber bikinis that playboys wore on the Spanish Riviera in the 1970's. Brights were balanced with tight black polyester trousers (a guy's version of women's comfy leggings), neutral colored cords and the ever popular blue jeans.

**Nautica** "Being relaxed is not about being sloppy" maintains **David Chu**, in an interview he gave *FI* at his press presentation at the Hudson Hotel. "Nautica is for a guy who likes to be easy, is very international and has many different lifestyles."

Chu was very inspired by the members of the Star Class Olympic team. Although he made extensive use of techno fabrics in the past, he confined his use of them to the "sport" segment of his collection this season (silver shorts and warm-up pants). He was "very excited" about natural fibers, cotton, and linen in particular. His favorite pieces are a seersucker suit, which many of the male editors in the audience were putting on their personal buy lists for spring, and a blue Eisenhower jacket. Fashion editor, LaMont Jones, of *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* expressed her opinion of the Spring Collection: "a slightly older guy in his late 20's to mid-30's who is looking for a pulled together coordinated look".

#### **Keenan Duffty**

"My clothes are for guys who wish they were rock stars," he said laughingly to the group of TV reporters that surrounded him after the show. "And," he added gleefully, "I'll be coming out very soon with a line for the ladies who fancy themselves to be rock stars." This "Revolt into Style" a.k.a. Rock Star wannabe on a trust

fund was fully achieved. Duffty's first show under his own label possessed the same punk rock sensibility as his show six months ago under the Slinky Vagabond label. The show brought to mind Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren in their "Sex Shop" days and Sid Vicious in his prime. The designer hits the nail on the head when it comes to portraying the English punk look even though he is, in fact, Irish.

For spring, his men have acquired some polish, like rock stars that are starting to experience success. There were consistent elements from past collections, such as the skintight drainpipe trousers (this time in loud stripes), and sparkly tee shirts with subversive messages blazoned across them. The influence of Mick Jagger's dandy style of dressing was also in evidence. Quite a few of Duffty's "rock stars" have traded in last season's acid washed jean jackets for colorful Victorian frock coats and sneakers. British makeup star Charlie Greene was again in charge of makeup, and did a terrific job transforming the normally comely male models into the gaunt and pallid punks who strode aggressively down the catwalk. This season though, there were fewer Mohawks and platinum hairstreaks and the do's were generally more toned down.



**SHE** is a young, trendy, sportswear line out of Germany that offers a fashion forward look at entry bridge price points. There are microfiber polyesters, polished finish denims, summery linens and suede. Impeccable details include tulle overlays, zippers, and side ties. True winners are the men's wear striped wrap dresses, the pastel suede jacket worn with gray wool trousers or floral print pants, and the great denim pieces in white. The fresh, cropped denim pants work with wrap and tied cotton shirtings. A little v-neck sweater with ruching pairs with striped cotton, side-tied crop pant.

**RIO** is another newcomer to the American market. This sportswear collection aims to offer a young, funky look with a true missy fit at lower bridge prices. The extensive collection bases its look on chic viscose blend plaids that are used in directional walk shorts topped by classic twin sets with contrast taping. There are coordinating softly striped pants in blue/tan/yellow that work back to all the sweaters. Career pantsuits come in crisp shantung, softened with zip-front, striped blouses with cap sleeves. Rio has fun jungle leaf prints, charming water color florals and Versace-inspired floral/animal prints, as well as viscose/linen re-colored plaids that work with black microfiber pieces.



BRIONI

The women's collection by **BRIONI** is only in its second season, but already displays a polished, conservative elegance that encompasses neutral gray, beige, and celery with sparks of bright colors that are unexpected but very welcome. The outstanding pieces are the impeccably cut shaped blazers with top stitched lapels and mother-of-pearl buttons; the banker's stripe, single-breasted pantsuit; and a fabulous shaped, coral shantung jacket. A tailored gray wool/silk blend pantsuit, updated with 3/4 sleeves and turn back cuffs, is sharp as a knife and just as polished.

There is a great deal of gray at **GIVENCHY**, appearing in a range of tonal shades. However, there are also many wonderful pieces in spring's rich spectrum of color. Highlights from a tightly edited collection include the tropical stretch wools, like the zip-front elongated jacket and pants, a belted safari jacket and trousers, the tiny bird's-eye check components, and yellow stretch wool separates. A casual black leather jacket and the Givenchy logo tee in black/white paired with white piped black jeans are terrific. Turquoise and toast brown linens and fluid matte jersey separates that work back to the linens are other key pieces in a well-rounded collection.



tant role. Swim apparel must now perform in more than one arena and is expected to pass muster at the pool, the beach, the lunch table and maybe even as part of a club going outfit. The line between what is strictly "swimwear" and "street wear" becomes increasingly blurred; as consumers demand that each item they buy do double-duty. Cover-ups in particular take swimwear from poolside to evenings out. Neiman Marcus continues to

do "a nice pareu business" confirms Ms. Kaner. Caftans continue to sell well too. "Cover-ups," Ms. Long of TOBE notes, "are very versatile." Jackets and sarongs can take you into evening. XOXO Swim offers a strong selection of solid red and black polyamide/elastan mesh pieces in the "Glamour Girl" group. A boat neck top and drawstring skirt easily doubles as a daring day outfit for walking the strip and shopping. Joyce Azria of BCBG Swim designs a short skirt and pareu to go with each grouping on the line.

Oscar de la Renta Swim offers yet another attractive option, a tie-dyed, sheer, oversized shirt and drawstring pant. In terms of fabrication, Ms. LeBrun points out that many manufacturers are using fine mesh fabrics for cover-ups. The mesh is a gossamer nylon net or tulle that is sheer. Mesh inserts, such as the butterfly in the Free by Gottex black swim set, make these pieces suitable to wear on their own as a pretty top off the beach.

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### Tommy Hilfiger

"I was inspired by the sporty classics of Nantucket. I wanted to create a collection that captures the athletic ease and confidence of the American man. The irreverent way in which he mixes, matches and customizes whatever is at hand is the true spirit of American casual wear at its best."

Mr. Hilfiger had all the traditional preppy elements down pat: the brown leather loafers, the tan cotton canvas sneakers, colorful grosgrain accents, madras, embroidery, nautical themes, crisp tennis whites. He indulged himself in some literal takes that gave us the feeling of leafing through the pages of Lisa Birnbach's tongue-in-cheek bestseller, *The Preppy Handbook*. Some of the models even had their

hair styled in the short, Republican style haircut preppies favored in the early '80s.

What saved this show from being merely an ode to the handsome, tanned Nantucket prepster was *how* Mr. Hilfiger combined these elements. We loved looks like a navy linen blazer, light blue T-shirt and multicolored patchwork pants. He was right on target with his overblown red and white lobster print Bermuda shorts and flat front trousers. It was also great to see Lilly Pulitzeresque pants, embroidered with lobsters and "TH" flags. Long live logo mania! Mr. Hilfiger brought back his "Tommy Tartan" from a few seasons ago and showed some terrific 2-button blazers and Bermuda shorts. A light blue canvas fisherman's jacket with reflective stripes — the

perfect overcoat for vacationing preppies.

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